

**Governor's Upper Yellowstone River Task Force**  
**Meeting Summary**  
**January 12, 2000**  
**Community Room (basement), City/County Courthouse**  
**Meeting began at 7:00 p.m.**

**I.     Introductions**

**Members Present:**

John Bailey, Chair	Brant Oswald
Mike Atwood	Rod Siring
Dave Haug	Bob Wiltshire
Tom Lane	Ellen Woodbury
Jerry O'Hair	Jim Woodhull

**Others Present:**

Joel Tohtz, Ex-Officio	Pete Schaoe
John Logan, Ex-Officio	Ken Weaver
Terri Marceron, Ex-Officio	Drew Overholser
Laurence Siroky, Ex-Officio	Alan Kesselheim
Allan Steinle, Ex-Officio	John Kirby
Stuart Lehman, Ex-Officio	Lionel Dicharry
Liz Galli-Noble, Coordinator	Jeanne-Marie Souvigney
Amy Miller, Administrative Secretary	Pete Story
Jim Robinson	Andy Dana
Chuck Dalby	Jim Barrett
Tom Pick	Don Fallon
Scott Zimmerman	
Duncan Patten	

**II.    Prior Meeting Minutes**

The December 15, 1999 minutes were approved with the following modifications: in sections *1999 Annual Report*, *Technical Advisory Committee Studies*, and *Schedule Future Task Force Meetings* change the year from 1999 to 2000 and the meeting adjourned at 11:00 p.m.

**III.   Technical Advisory Committee Studies**

**(1)   Approval of Upland Land Use Study proposal (now known as "Watershed"  
Land Use proposal)**

Tom Pick gave a presentation to the Task Force outlining the objectives, methods, and products of the proposed Watershed Land Use Study. The proposal was prepared by representatives of the Task Force, TAC, NRCS, and MSU. The intent was to address land use issues and resource study needs that have been expressed by the Task Force and TAC. This Land Use assessment component will also be used along with other study components to complete the Cumulative Effects Investigation. Tom pointed out that this study proposal has been developed without specific regard to who might actually carry out the analysis work. The Task Force could choose to contract out the work or identify another party, if desired, once the objectives, methods, and products are approved. NRCS management has not yet approved or indicated the ability to carry out the project, given budgetary limitations. Tom is

scheduled to meet with Shirley Gammon, Montana NRCS State Conservationist, to discuss the proposal and funding options.

The objectives of the study are to obtain, compare and evaluate the extent (area) and distribution (relative locations) of various types of land cover or use in the watershed between two periods in time, that is the 1970s and 1999. Choice of the 1970s as the historical period of time is based on the availability of suitable photos and images. In response to several questions about the selection of these two time periods, Tom and Duncan Patten explained that one integral facet of all study components is to compare changes that have occurred in the river system over time, to give us some idea of the general trend for the resources studied. The historical comparison aspect of the studies will help the scientists, Task Force members, and public to understand the various factors that may be affecting the river system. It was pointed out that the 1970s, or any other time period, are not intended to represent any given quality or condition (good, bad, or indifferent), but was simply selected to represent a period in time. Then, looking at other changes that have occurred during the intervening time period in the watershed, we can better identify those factors that may play important roles in the function of the system. To help evaluate land use, the study will also be conducted at two scales. The watershed from Yellowstone National Park boundary to Springdale will be evaluated at a scale of 1:100,000 to give a general evaluation over this area. The valley floor (flatter areas between the mountain slopes) between Gardiner and Springdale will be evaluated at a greater scale (1:24,000) to provide more precise numbers, since this area is closer to the river. The proposal indicated that information from the National Park Service would be incorporated as available. Several Task Force members questioned the integrity of a watershed evaluation if the Yellowstone Park is not included. The Park Service, when recently contacted, indicated that they are willing to participate and to share any relevant information they have. Tom pointed out potential problems with data compatibility (they use very general land use cover categories), but indicated that the upper watershed in the Yellowstone Park would be included.

The watershed land use study will be conducted through interpretation of aerial photographs and satellite images. Tom explained the process of using a combination of computer software and field checks to classify and verify the land cover or use categories. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software will then be used to depict and analyze changes in land use. NRCS staff specialists will then evaluate this information (as appropriate) with respect to the implications on watershed integrity, specifically:

- hydrologic function
- water quality
- soil characterization
- upland wildlife habitat

The written narrative presented suggested that land use interpretations take the form of “recommendations” to the Task Force. Task Force members requested that the terms “comments”, “evaluations”, or “results” be used instead because they are more appropriate, given that it is the Task Force’s role to prepare recommendations. Tom discussed the role of NRCS in providing resource recommendations or alternatives to landowners. He gave several examples relative to the land use assessment. He indicated that such recommendations, given the nature of the information generated, would likely involve identifying potential areas of interest for more detailed interpretation or comparison to the other resource studies. Task Force members indicated they understood and accepted this role, however, they preferred use of a less finite term. Tom agreed to change the wording.

In discussing the proposed budget, Tom explained that the project scope has expanded significantly since it was first proposed and as a result, the budget (approx. \$75,000) has increased accordingly. However, it is a much more comprehensive and better project design. The study now addresses nearly the entire watershed where previously it only referred to the uplands.

**A motion was made to approve the Watershed Land Use proposal including the proposed budget of \$75,000. The motion was seconded and then passed unanimously.**

## **(2) Wildlife Study Proposal Discussion**

Having been tabled at the last Task Force meeting, the Wildlife Study proposal was revisited. The Task Force was asked to be specific about their concerns with the proposal. The pro's and con's of the proposal were then discussed for over an hour, with Duncan Patten, Technical Advisory Committee Chairman, answering questions and addressing comments. Several of the major issues brought up were:

- Jerry O'Hair contacted several large and small landowners and they were against the proposal, because of the endangered species portion of the study.
- Landowners are against the proposal, and will not allow access on their property.
- The Army Corps of Engineers requires that a wildlife study be completed for their Special Area Management Plan.
- There are no incentives for landowners to allow agencies on their property.
- Landowners are good citizens, however they want to protect their property rights.
- Bank stabilization effects and wildlife may not be directly related.
- The riparian mapping and the wildlife habitat do relate within the overall project design.
- How will government agencies use this data?
- The data gathered on endangered species could be positive in that landowners would be proactive in their actions and the data could dispute a listing of endangered/threatened species.
- Could researchers focus on non-private land in the study area and landowners that allow access?
- A wildlife study needs to be completed; the Task Force approved it in an overall project design.
- Can the upland study plus wildlife be tied together in some way?
- The study area is too small; it should include the uplands.
- Do flood events have a positive or negative affect on wildlife? Will this come out of the study?
- Why study birds? Can they be used as indicators?
- How much information already exists? Can this help with the access issue?
- Can sound data be collected without access to private lands?
- Jerry O'Hair suggested that Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) might be able to help with the field work of the proposal.

John Bailey asked that the TAC revise the Wildlife proposal. He suggested that the study be broken into two parts: (1) literature view and riparian habitat relation, and (2) field work and data collection. Duncan will take this suggestion and all the other issues addressed to the TAC members and will report back.

**A motion was made to send the Wildlife proposal back to the Technical Advisory Committee to find different alternatives for future Task Force review. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **IV. 1999 Annual Report**

The Task Force reviewed the second draft of the Annual Report and made several changes. Liz Galli-Noble will modify the report as suggested by the Task Force and will work with members of the subcommittee. Liz will send the 1999 Annual Report to Rocky Mountain Printing on January 21, 2000.

**A motion was made to approve the second draft of the 1999 Annual Report with the final modifications made by the Task Force, the motion passed unanimously.**

**A motion was made to approve the budget as submitted by Liz Galli-Noble for reproduction of 500 copies of the 1999 Annual Report by Rocky Mountain Printing, the motion passed unanimously.**

#### **V. Schedule Future Task Force Meetings**

Liz Galli-Noble would like Task Force members to call her at 222-3701 if they will be unable to attend scheduled meetings.

Next meetings are:

February 15, 2000 Tuesday at the Depot Center.

March 21, 2000 Tuesday at the Depot Center.

#### **IX. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p.m.**

**Please make note that the location of our next few meetings has changed. The Task Force will be meeting in Depot Center on Park Street next to Martins Cafe. Entrance doors to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor main room are located on the track side of the building (North side).**